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Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children

Letter dated 22 February 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The International Conference on War-Affected Children (10-17 September 2000), held at Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, was the first international intergovernmental conference dedicated to the issue of children affected by armed conflict. The Winnipeg Conference brought together the United Nations system, regional organizations, States, and civil society, including young people, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to create a comprehensive plan of action to address the concerns of children affected by war.

The meeting produced several outcomes to which I would like to draw your attention: (a) the Governments attending the Ministerial Meeting, co-hosted by your Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, adopted an Agenda for War-Affected Children, which sets out a framework for international action (see A/55/467-S/2000/973); (b) the Ministerial Meeting produced a Chair statement and summary of commitments made at Winnipeg; (c) the Experts' Meeting, co-hosted by UNICEF, produced a Chair summary entitled "Caught in the Crossfire No More", which makes substantive recommendations to further protect war-affected children; and (d) youth delegates presented a youth statement to the Ministerial Meeting (see annexes).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the text of this letter and the attached documents, namely, the Chair's statement at the Ministerial Meeting; the Chairs' summary of the Experts' Meeting, "Caught in the Crossfire No More"; and the youth statement to the Ministerial Meeting as a document of the special session of the General Assembly on children and its Preparatory Committee.

(*Signed*) Michel **Duval**
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative

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Annexes to the letter dated 22 February 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Annex I

CHAIR'S STATEMENT AT THE MINISTERIAL LEVEL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WAR-AFFECTED CHILDREN IN WINNIPEG, CANADA

We, at the invitation of the Government of Canada, and with the active participation of the United Nations Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and the Honorary Chair of the Conference, Ms. Graça Machel, meeting in Winnipeg, Canada from 16-17 September 2000, adopted an **Agenda for War-Affected Children**.

Collectively, we have committed to leadership in addressing the problems facing war-affected children, as governments and with our partners in international organizations, civil society and youth. To shape the new consensus, we have pledged to take concrete steps using the results of this Conference to guide our future work, such as the 'major and immediate commitments' elaborated in the **Summary by the Chairs of the Experts Meeting**. Those pledges, attached to this Statement, and the commitments to be made following this Conference, are testimony to our willingness to match deeds to our words.

We have agreed to establish a follow-up committee to fulfill our leadership role. A steering group, composed of Canada, Ghana and other countries, the Secretary General's Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict and UNICEF, will elaborate the mechanism to do this. The follow up committee will make concrete our commitments, by developing a strategy and specific actions that the international community can take up, identifying how these initiatives are to be supported and implemented and establishing time-lines for their completion.

We have launched a movement at the Winnipeg Conference on War-affected Children and we will carry this momentum forward to the United Nations Special Session on Children in 2001 and beyond.

As at 3:00 p.m. 17-09-00

ANNEX DRAFT

This document is a partial and preliminary roll-up of the commitments and pledges drawn from national statements at the Winnipeg Conference. We invite countries not yet represented in this document and countries that would like to add pledges and commitments to submit their statements to the Conference Secretariat by September 30, 2000 to be included in the final conference output document.

A. Youth

- Will **form an international youth network** to focus on the issues of war-affected children and to propose and implement projects. The main activities of this network will include: education and awareness-raising; development and implementation of small, locally-appropriate projects for and by war-affected children; and engagement of other youth from their communities. Through this network, youth will maintain contact with each other in order to share ideas, experiences and best practices. Youth will communicate with Minister Minna to help set up the structure of the network.

B. Non-governmental organisations

- The NGOs presented a Plan of Action entitled: 'Peace Is Every Child's Right' to the Experts Meeting and to governmental delegations at the Ministerial Meeting. NGOs will continue to work with this document as an advocacy tool; it will also continue as a Working Document for NGOs, leading into the 2001 Special Session on Children. (see: www.cpcc.ottawa.on.ca, and click on 'Children and Armed Conflict Working Group').

- The NGOs will increase constructive co-operation amongst each other through an international NGO Network, building on existing coalitions and alliances to form a network of NGOs interested in issues related to Children and Armed Conflict. Also they will develop their unique role in holding government agencies publicly accountable. The network proposes to have sub-groups based on regions, thematic interests, and specific situations. The objectives of the Network are: to promote communication between existing coalitions and groups, regionally and internationally; to share information and best practices from the field; to monitor progress on commitments made at Winnipeg; to facilitate joint advocacy initiatives; to establish an inventory of organisations and the work they are doing; to provide country and thematic information on this subject; and to generate public awareness.

- The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), based in London, UK, has offered to provide a forum for the immediate exchange of information through their existing internet and e-mail list serve services

- Among regional NGO initiatives to be undertaken, for example, in Africa, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANP) , the Nairobi Peace Initiative (NPI) and the African Network for the Prevention and Protection of Children Against Neglect (ANPPCAN) will work more closely together. Also, civil society groups from West Africa resolve to alert the regional and international communities about the infectious nature of the conflict in the Mano River area countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone - a conflict which has the real possibility of engulfing more countries in the West Africa sub-region. They also resolve to mobilize support for the empowerment of civil society to play a decisive role in the resolution of the crisis in the West-Africa sub-region. As a first step, they agree to convene a meeting of civil society groups from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia without delay.

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C. Governments

AUSTRIA

- Will focus on the implementation of the **recommendations of the recent OSCE Human Dimension Seminar** on children in armed conflict.

BOSNIA-HERZOGOVINA

- Will implement a policy of responsible **cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal** for the former Yugoslavia.

REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI

- With the assistance of UNICEF, will develop **research activities; family reunification and foster family programs; and community activities** targeting unaccompanied children, war and AIDS orphans, and street kids.
- Will reinforce programs to provide **psycho-social assistance** to these children.
- Will **build the capacity of national NGOs and local associations** to ensure the sustainability of programs.

CANADA

- **CDN $122 million over 5 years** (over and above regular programming) for **child protection progamming**, including war affected children. Note that this is the first dedicated budget in Canada for child protection programming.
- Naming of **General Romeo Dallaire** as Special Advisor on War-Affected Children.
- Launch **campaign for signature and ratification of the treaty on International Criminal Court**. The goal will be to obtain signature of the treaty by 31 December 2000 and then 60 states to ratify it.
- Funding of the establishment of a **Child Protection Unit in the Economic Community of West African States**, expected to be in place by 2001.
- Launch the creation of an independent **International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty**. Objective is to build a broader understanding of the issues and to foster global political consensus. The Commission's findings will be reported at the UN General Assembly in 2001.
- Prepared to commit CDN $100,000 to support the development of an **NGO-led system for monitoring and reporting** of the rights of children in conflict.
- Will commit resources to establish an **annual report to monitor the situation of war affected children**.

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- Support the preparation of a **comprehensive study on the impact of small arms on children**, to be presented at the UN conference on small arms, in 2001.
- Will contribute funds towards convening a **youth summit on war-affected children** immediately prior to the 2001 UN Special Session on Children.
- Resources to support **youth engagement** through the Youth Advisory Board, an initiative of the Olara Otunnu, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict.
- Will contribute funds towards the holding of a **Youth Prep-Com** for the 2001 UN Special Session on Children, early next year.
- Support to a study on how to **engage youth in media-related initiatives**. This could include youth-oriented and youth-driven radio networks, internet, and print reporting, as well as access to journalists and training.
- Will provide **50 overseas internships** focussing on child-related issues.
- Will support the development, via CANADEM, of a **specialised roster of experts** in children's issues from which it will be able to provide candidates for peace support operations such as in Sierra Leone.
- CIDA has identified a minimum of **CDN $1 million to help meet the needs of the Ugandan children held by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)** as soon as they are released. These needs include education, health, psycho-social support and recreation.
- **CDN $10 million project to train Kosovo teachers**, with a special emphasis on peacebuilding.
- **CDN $3 million to help Canadian and developing country NGOs** with their child protection programming (including war-affected children).
- **CDN $2 million over 5 years for research for child protection**, including war affected children. Research will include such issues as the role of girls in military and para-militaries and the linkages between HIV/AIDS and conflict.
- **CDN $5 million to support education programs** for war affected children **in Africa**.
- **CDN $500,000** to help include children affected by war in **international peacebuilding** initiatives.
- Five-year commitment to support an **International Youth Network**.
- Five-year commitment with resources to support **International Youth Experts** to recruit other children to dialogue, rather than to wage war.
- Support for the **accreditation** of these Youth Experts to participate in these sessions; including at next year's UN Special Session on Children.
- One-day **annual session in the United Nations General Assembly to discuss war-affected children**.
- Establishment of a **Child Protection Secretariat** within CIDA.
- **CDN $5 million** contribution over five years to support **vocational training centres** for Rwandan children (note: Canada has contributed $145 million for programs in Rwanda since the '94 genocide).

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- **CDN $1.7 million for basic infrastructure and educational activities** for children, youth and women in six refugee camps in the West Bank.
- **CDN $700,000 to UNICEF for the demobilisation of child soldiers in Sierra Leone.**
- Spearheading **child advocacy and mediation initiatives in Sierra Leone**. Will provide resources to ensure **child protection and advocacy** experts serve on the staff of the Independent Special Court for Sierra Leone. Are supporting the establishment of a National Children's Agency.
- **CDN $150,000 to design a $3.5 million Child Rights Project in Sri Lanka** focussing on the protection rights of children, including children affected by conflict.
- Per the joint communique of 17 September on immediate action on abducted children:
  - will meet with representatives of the Governments of Uganda, Sudan, Egypt and Libya on a regular basis in Khartoum and Kampala between October and December to assess the situation and action taken towards achieving their common goals.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

- Intend to **ratify the African Charter** on the Rights and Well-being of the Child.
- Intend to **ratify the Optional Protocal** (Children in Armed Conflict).
- Intend to **ratify the Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court.

REPUBLIC OF CUBA

- Will provide **medical care to children** in countries, including war affected countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America by sending doctors to the field.

EGYPT

Per the joint communique of 17 September on immediate action on abducted children:

- will meet with representatives of the Governments of Sudan, Uganda, Canada and Libya on a regular basis in Khartoum and Kampala between October and December to assess the situation and action taken towards achieving their common goals.

GERMANY

- Intention to **ratify the Optional Protocol** (Children in Armed Conflict).

ITALY

- Will take seps to **ratify the Optional Protocols** on Children in Armed Conflict and on Sale of Children.

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JAPAN

- As follow-up to the G8 Miyazaki Initiatives, Japan preparing to **co-host an expert meeting** later in 2000 with a focus on reintegration of child soldiers to society.
- Will ***host the Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children*** in 2001.

LIBYA

Per the joint communique of 17 September on immediate action on abducted children:

- will meet with representatives of the Governments of Sudan, Uganda, Canada, and Egypt on a regular basis in Khartoum and Kampala between October and December to assess the situation and action taken towards achieving their common goals.

REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

- Plans to **ratify both Optional Protocols** (Children in Armed Conflict; Sale of Children).

MALI

- Will adopt a **code of conduct for the armed forces and police** on the treatment of civilian populations in accordance with International Humanitarian Law
- **Creation of a national children's parliament** to give children a voice and a monitoring role.

MEXICO

- Will **promote dissemination of the provisions of the Optional Protocol** on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
- Will continue to **combat illegal trade in small and light arms and seek to establish limits on those weapons**, which threaten public safety, particularly that of children.
- Will **support efforts to eliminate landmines** and promote universal ratification of the Ottawa Convention.

NORWAY

- Will support **Save the Children Norway to hold a meeting in Kampala** to mobilize efforts for child victims of war in the Great Lakes region.
- Will **contribute CDN $1 million to Olympic Aid, UNHCR, and UNICEF** for their work on war-affected children in Sudan and Eritrea

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- If elected to Security Council for 2001/02, will vigorously pursue the UN effort to assist war-affected children

PORTUGAL

- Will ratify the International Criminal Court Statute.
- Has started the internal process to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in armed Conflicts.

ROMANIA

- In its capacity of OSCE Chairman-in-Office in the year 2001, intends to encourage regional and sub-regional organizations and initiatives to play a more active role in the protection of conflict-affected children; support OSCE efforts in setting up a coherent framework to include child protection, especially in armed conflict, into all of its operational activities.
- **Intention to ratify both Optional Protocols**.

SIERRA LEONE

- President recently announced **plans to have a national commission for war-affected children in place by the end of the year 2000**. Will help to ensure follow-up on the Plan of Action from the Accra Conference. The Commission will advocate and co-ordinate efforts on behalf of war-affected children in Sierra Leone; it will also serve as an ombudsman for children, adolescents and youth and will establish children-to-children networks.

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

- Will **organize a seminar for teachers in Kosovo** on how to help traumatized children.

SPAIN

- Steps to **ratify the Optional Protocol** on Children in Armed Conflict.
- Intention to **ratify the Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court.

SUDAN

- Per the joint communique of 17 September on immediate action on abducted children:
  - will take all measures to ensure the release and safe return of abducted children;
  - will meet with representatives of the Governments of Uganda, Canada, Egypt and

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Libya on a regular basis in Khartoum and Kampala between October and December to assess the situation and action taken towards achieving their common goals.

SWEDEN

- **Host an EU meeting** in March 2001 on Children in Armed Conflict and Displacement.
- Implement a **systematic child rights perspective** in development cooperation, both multilaterally and bilaterally. Children in armed conflict are given special priority.

SWITZERLAND

- Support for ministerial decision in **OSCE** to ensure the Organisation gives special attention to the Rights of the child, especially in the context of armed conflict; including through seeking creation, with OSCE, of an institution mandated to coordinate the Organisation's policies on children's rights.
- Intention to **ratify Statute of the International Criminal Court**.

TANZANIA

- Support restrictions on the manufacture and sale of not only small arms, but arms and weapons in general.

THAILAND

- Will implement a "**straight-18 policy**" for non-participation and non-recruitment of persons under 18.
- Intention to **sign the Optional Protocol** (Children in Armed Conflict).
- Intention to **sign the Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court.
- Will enhance cooperation with neighbouring countries to assist war-affected children who are victims of cross-border human trafficking.
- Will create public awareness of and engage youth and children in the non-violence and conflict prevention campaign of Manifesto 2000 (a UNESCO global project).

UGANDA

Per the joint communique of 17 September on immediate action on abducted children:

- will receive and act on information concerning any abduction of Sudanese children by the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA);
- will intensify the campaign against the illicit sale, trafficking, provision and use of small arms and anti-personnel mines.
- will meet with representatives of the Governments of Sudan, Canada, Egypt and

Libya on a regular basis in Khartoum and Kampala between October and December to assess the situation and action taken towards achieving their common goals.

UNITED STATES

- To focus part of its programming to mine awareness; pledges ongoing commitment, including funding, to President Clinton's "**De-mining 2010 Initiative**", whose goal is the creation of a mine-safe world by 2010.
- Pledged **U.S. $1 million per year for 4 years to the ICRC for programs to assist women and girls in conflict**.
- Pledged **U.S. $1 million per year for 2 years on programs to address sexual and gender-based violence**.

D. Regional Bodies

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- Will provide support to NGOs working on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child with special reference to child soldiers, homeless children, child labour and basic education.
- Will provide support for initiatives to care for children from war-torn areas.
- Will support efforts to reintegrate children associated with fighting forces.

E. United Nations System

SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT

- **Support the signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol** (Children and Armed Conflict) by all states.
- Encourage the more effective use of **Resolution 1261** as a tool for advocacy.
- Encourage the Security Council to incorporate the principles and practices in Resolution 1261 into its ongoing work.
- Develop with regional and sub-regional organizations **neighbourhood initiatives to curb the cross-border activities** harmful to children in times of armed conflict.
- **Support critically-needed research** in areas such as: local value systems that protect children, scientific and independent assessments of programming for war-affected children, and establishing reliable data on the situation of war-affected children.

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UNICEF

- Increased support for the demobilisation of child soldiers in Sierra Leone through a $700,000 contribution from Canada.
- An increased commitment to provide education for children in emergencies, including through a $2 million contribution from Canada.
- Will work more closely with NGOs in the lead-up to the UN Special Session on Children in 2001 to follow-up on the Framework for Commitment put forward by the Experts meeting.
- **Support to youth participation networks**.
- Under its chairmanship of the UNAIDS coordinating committee, UNICEF **will convene a meeting to develop a strategy for children, HIV/AIDS and conflict**, as recommended by Graca Machel's review and the Experts meeting.
- Pursue and intensify its **campaign for ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court** and the **Optional Protocol**, including support to countries for implementation and technical support for drafting enabling legislation.
- Support an international study on small arms and children for the 2001 Meeting on Small Arms.

Annex II

Caught in the Crossfire No More: A Framework for Commitment to War-Affected Children

Summary by the Chairs of the Experts' Meeting

Introduction:

We, the participants at the Experts' Meeting of the International Conference on War-Affected Children, held in Winnipeg, Canada, September 13-15, 2000, declare that conflicts throughout the world have caused unacceptable suffering to children. The plight of war-affected children both as victims and combatants is one of the most disturbing issues facing the global community. Despite numerous regional and international commitments, there are too many unfulfilled promises and too few mechanisms to ensure accountability for our shortcomings.

War subjects children to physical, psychological, sexual and social violence. No child is unaffected by war. War-affected children are at a greater risk to grow into a generation of adults more committed to violence than to peace. Commitments to war-affected children today will strengthen prospects for peace, human rights, and global security in the future.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan has said that; "we must do much more to move from words to deeds, from the elaboration of norms to 'an era of application.'" The time has come for governments, the corporate sector, NGOs, UN agencies, youth and others to act to achieve the "era of application" by ensuring that our commitments become deeds that make a difference in the lives of children. The youth delegates at the Winnipeg conference have called for practical solutions and for their speedy implementation.

We have advanced our knowledge of the issue of war-affected children since the release of Graça Machel's groundbreaking report *"The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children"* in 1996. The young people, experts and government officials who have attended this conference have all contributed new knowledge and insight on the issue. We have been inspired and informed in particular by Graça Machel's Review 2000 of her original study circulated by the Canadian Government, the *Report of the Secretary General to the Security Council on the Protection of Children in Armed Conflict* of July 2000, the NGO Action Plan: *Peace is Every Child's Right*, the deliberations of the Winnipeg Youth Meeting and proposals from the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict. Together, we have reviewed what we know, identified what needs to be explored further, and outlined some key priorities and practical commitments that we will honour.

We commit ourselves to further develop in the year ahead the undertakings and recommendations set out here, so that the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children, taking place in September 2001, can review and endorse our specific commitments to the rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict.

If these commitments are to be respected – if we are to truly enter into the era of application – all elements of society must contribute.

We wish to highlight as our **major and immediate** commitments:

1. Ensure the entry into force of the International Criminal Court Statute and the universal ratification of the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* by the time of the UN Special Session on Children in September 2001.

2. Secure significant, new investment in quality education for war-affected children by national authorities, supported by donors, NGOs and the UN system. Education must be a priority within humanitarian assistance.

3. Create a place at the table for young people, to enable them to present their agenda for the future to the Special Session on Children in 2001, and to help prepare them for this role by supporting youth networks and other youth initiatives.

4. Develop an effective international monitoring network to ensure systematic reporting on child rights abuses in all conflict-affected and conflict-prone countries, and make sure that follow-up actions are taken urgently and responsibly.

5. Conduct a study on the impact of small arms on children by the time of the International Conference on Small Arms in 2001 and follow up with concerted action.

6. Use all the levers at our disposal to effect the release of all abducted children, in particular those abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda.

7. Allocate a greater proportion of HIV/AIDS funding for both care and protection programmes for children affected by conflict.

The following points emerged as **fundamental priorities** from the various workshops and plenary discussions that took place during the three days of the Experts' meeting at the Winnipeg Conference. Strong and immediate action is required in these areas in order to launch the "era of application." Business as usual is not enough.

Children as a zone of peace:
There is no situation in which violence against children, or the exploitation, recruitment or targeting of youth is justifiable. Schools, health centres or other places where children gather should never be attacked. Any targeting of children or violation of their rights must be immediately, repeatedly and visibly condemned. Geographical "zones of peace" and "days of

tranquility" must be insisted upon and respected to ensure the delivery of assistance to children. The rights of children must be a central element of any peace agreement. There can be no impunity for those who violate children's rights or support those who do, be they governments, corporate actors or others; they must be identified and condemned. Unaccompanied children, or those separated from their parents require special measures to ensure their protection, care and reunification with family.

Commitment and action:
A sustained improvement in the situation of children in conflict cannot take place without strong and committed action from governments, non-state actors, UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector and youth themselves. Safeguarding the security and rights of the child demands the courage to shape a new consensus that accords children the highest priority in all actions before, during and after conflict. Leaders at all levels and in every sector of society - government, the private sector, civil society, international and regional organisations - must rise to the challenge of fulfilling their responsibilities to protect children. Universal standards for the assurance of child rights must finally be recognised as taking precedence over any specific political agenda; they must no longer be subject to the vagaries of political self interest.

Accountability and impunity:
Accountability demands commitments to legal standards through the universal ratification and implementation of international and regional instruments; as well as national monitoring and reporting systems which are supported by international mechanisms. The failure of the international community to take action against those who violate children's rights is the principal cause allowing the continuation of the intolerable situation of millions of war-affected children in the world today. Those who violate children's rights must be named, shamed, held accountable and rendered powerless by all means necessary. Impunity must never be allowed to prevail. Accountability means much more than simply bringing war criminals to trial. It signifies the creation of a political and social climate in which those who violate children's rights or who collude in their violation - be they governments, insurgent groups, private sector forces or other actors, are made to feel the repugnance of civilised individuals and societies. Establishing innovative mechanisms to hold non-state actors accountable is a particular priority which has to be addressed by the international community.

Education:
Education is central to humanitarian action. Good quality education which enables children to think critically, solve problems, collaborate with others and respect diversity is the key to a future free of armed conflict. Schools provide learning opportunities which empower children by giving them hope and skills for the future. They also create an atmosphere of stability for children whose lives have been affected by turmoil, displacement and the breakdown of family structures. Education is also an essential alternative to recruitment. Schools should be central to the promotion of HIV/AIDS awareness and peace education. Sustained national and international financial commitments are critical to the continuation and expansion of good quality educational services in post-conflict societies. Particular priority must be given to the education of girls.

Youth participation:

Young people can be both victims and perpetrators of violence during conflict. As such, they should not suffer in silence; their voices must be heard. The youth participation in the Winnipeg Conference has shown that when given the opportunity to express their views, young people demonstrate insight, commitment and the desire to build a better world by improving the plight of those affected by conflict.

We will no longer plan and implement humanitarian programmes or negotiate political settlements on behalf of war-affected youth without their participation.

Corporate sector responsibility:

The corporate sector must establish its own codes of conduct and greater transparency regarding activities in conflict zones. Independent monitoring bodies must be supported to highlight corporate activities which directly or indirectly contribute to or benefit from the targeting, exploitation and abuse of children in zones of conflict.

HIV/AIDS:

With HIV/AIDS so prevalent today, the rape and sexual abuse of children is a traumatic violation of their most fundamental rights, and a physical and psychological threat to their survival. Conflict and HIV/AIDS collide in destructive ways. Conflict conditions can destroy family structures, cause displacement and increase the likelihood of the sexual abuse of children – especially girls - thus heightening their exposure to HIV/AIDS. War also destroys systems for health, the screening of blood transfusions and AIDS awareness education programmes that help prevent the spread of the disease during times of peace. Care and support must be made available to children affected by HIV/AIDS in zones of conflict, and schools and educational programs must be the focal points for HIV/AIDS awareness and care.

International solidarity:

Systematic action to address the above issues and the recommendations which follow, cannot take place without sustained international solidarity in the form of the universal ratification of all relevant international human rights standards, the development of concrete mechanisms for monitoring child rights abuses and the commitment of the resources necessary to ensure protection, care and rehabilitation of all children threatened by or exposed to violence.

The following commitments are essential for the protection of the rights of children in conflict:

Governments

Ensuring accountability and ending impunity:

- Sign and ratify all conventions and agreements related to the protection of children in armed conflict, with special emphasis placed on the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Ottawa Convention* on landmines. Deposit upon ratification of the *Optional Protocol* binding declarations indicating a minimum age of 18 for voluntary recruitment into national armed forces. For the ratification of the *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* the target is: 10 ratifications by the end of the year 2000, 100 signatures by May 25, 2001 and 50 ratifications by the Special Session for Children in September 2001; with the majority of signatories setting a ban on the recruitment or participation of those less than 18 years old in armed forces.

- Incorporate into national legislations mechanisms for enforcing all relevant international and regional human rights and humanitarian law treaties, including penal sanctions for violators.

- Ensure that those responsible for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes perpetrated against children are prosecuted for these crimes and excluded from any amnesty provisions contemplated during peace negotiations.

- Apply pressure on warring parties which violate children's rights by cutting off or limiting their sources of support. This can be done by imposing sanctions on the trading of natural resources which come from conflict areas, cutting off economic support from diaspora communities, restricting the travel or foreign financial holdings of violators and denying recognition to individuals and groups who have committed crimes against children if they subsequently ascend to power.

- Make the signature, ratification and implementation of the *Optional Protocol* to the CRC a pre-condition for defense co-operation, military training, joint military exercises or arms sales and exchanges.

- Hold corporations within their jurisdiction accountable for their direct activities in conflict affected countries, as well as for their indirect support to countries which violate the rights of children in conflict situations. Governments should utilise executive and legislative measures to prevent corporate actors within their jurisdiction from engaging in commercial activities with parties to armed conflict who violate international standards for the protection of children.

- Governments to prosecute rape against girls and women during armed conflict as a war crime.

- Arms embargo violations should be criminalized and prosecuted.

- Condition any aid (be it military, economic or political) or diplomatic recognition of a warring party on respect for child rights; especially the non-recruitment and non-deployment of children as soldiers.

Prevention:

- Ensure universal implementation of birth registration by 2015, with particular attention to children who are refugees, internally displaced or belonging to minority groups.

- Support the development of child protection networks before conflict breaks out. These should include safe places for children to go, programs for adolescents which include vocational training and economic alternatives, and community centers for peace-building.

Establish systematic recruitment procedures which ensure that no child under the age of 18 is recruited into armed forces.

- Train military forces in child rights, placing emphasis on the specific needs of women and girls. This training should be conducted by military officers conscious of these issues, in a simplified manner which reflects the language, culture, socialization and knowledge base of the trainee group. These programmes should also involve organizations with specific knowledge on children's rights and conflict situations; especially NGOs, and be implemented on a long-term basis and updated regularly. Such training should also be extended to civilian police forces and other international personnel.

- Provide new guidelines and standards for nations to train their peacekeeping troops or civilian police forces in a way which effectively addresses the complex issues of 21st century human security operations; particularly those focussed on the protection of children.

- Bilateral military assistance should include training on international human rights and humanitarian law, with an emphasis on children's rights.

- Governments with embassies or consulates in war-affected countries should monitor the situation of children there; prioritizing the issue of child rights abuses and adopting appropriate policies to address the situation as part of their bilateral agenda.

- Reduce the flow of small arms by the following means:
  - Adopt binding codes of conduct at the national, regional, and international levels;
  - Ensure transparency in arms transfers by making government reports on all transactions available in public registries;
  - Create a reliable system for marking arms and ammunition at the time of manufacture;
  - Conduct preventive disarmament through programmes for the collection and destruction of weapons;
  - Improve the system of stockpile management and security.

- States to destroy old or surplus weapons stocks rather than selling them or giving them away.

- Ensure that the 2001 Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects acts to:
  - Reduce the legal trade of small arms and eliminate arms sales to regions of conflict;
  - Strengthen mechanisms for prevention and control of the illicit trade and stockpiling of small arms;
  - Monitor and enforce arms embargoes;
  - Withhold military aid to countries or groups which use child soldiers.

- Work to transform cultures of violence and militarism into more peaceful societies by implementing measures to end all violence against children, including the use of corporal punishment.

Protection and Security:

- Establish effective national institutions and mechanisms, such as a national Commission for Children or office of a national Ombudsperson for Children, to ensure that the concerns of children are placed high on the national agenda, especially in countries affected by conflict.

- Establish and accord priority programmes for disarming, demobilising and reintegrating child soldiers both within and outside of peacekeeping environments. These should include specific measures to ensure children's protection from exploitation and re-recruitment, and address the special needs of girls and children with disabilities.

- Governments and regional organisations should declare child soldier-free zones.

- Adhere to the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement with a view toward preventing forced displacement and providing protection and assistance during displacement. Ensure that refugee and IDP camps are not institutionalized as permanent settlements. All necessary means should be used to prevent camps from becoming sanctuaries and recruiting grounds for militias and other elements that threaten children's security.

- Commit to training military forces in child protection issues, and contribute to appropriate training for humanitarian agencies in security and risk-assessment.

- Impose, monitor and enforce arms embargoes in situations where civilians are targeted or where widespread and systematic violations of humanitarian and human rights laws are committed and where children are recruited as soldiers.

- Establish more landmine awareness programmes, specifically directed at children in affected areas.

Peace-building:

- Incorporate into all peace agreements clear provisions for disarming, demobilising and reintegrating soldiers, including child combatants. Establish institutional frameworks and provide funding support for disarmament and the safe and timely disposal of small arms and ammunitions.

- Ensure the protection of child soldiers from retribution, summary execution, arbitrary detention, torture and other punitive measures, in accordance with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and international juvenile justice standards. Governments should ensure that any judicial proceedings involving child soldiers must be within a framework of restorative justice that guarantees the physical, psychological and social rehabilitation of the child. They must also work to ensure that the justice process is as local and culturally sensitive as possible and that it supports healing and reconciliation.

- Ensure that protection provisions for children as victims and witnesses are included in the work of *ad hoc* war crime tribunals and in the rules of evidence and procedures of the International Criminal Court and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions.

- Establish channels which enable children to safely bring their perspectives and ideas directly to national leaders, governments and other adults in all walks of life. Young people suffer

directly in conflict and their experiences and views must inform adult decision making.

- Create spaces for both established and emerging youth organisations to meet, share experiences, network and support each other in their work of monitoring and advocating around issues related to war-affected children.

Assistance:

- Invest in children before, during and after conflict; ensuring their rights to education, health care and other basic services.

- Ensure safe and continuous access to children for the delivery of humanitarian services in conflict zones, particularly to humanitarian NGOs, regardless of the location, nationality, religion, gender or ethnicity of the children. Encourage the appropriate use of truces and cease-fires where applicable, while recognising that cease-fires may prolong conflict by facilitating the rearming and regrouping of combatants and freezing the lines of conflict.

- Ensure that access to education is rapidly restored, supported and strengthened during and after conflict, in keeping with commitments made at the Dakar 2000 Conference on Education for All. Education must be funded with the same sense of urgency as life-saving emergency assistance and must be made a central pillar of humanitarian assistance. This includes non-formal education, vocational and skills training and special attention to the educational needs of girls.

- Core education curriculums should include conflict resolution skills, life skills training, landmine awareness, HIV/AIDS prevention, human rights, peace education and psycho-social support. Education should not fuel ethnic prejudice. Specialised, accelerated learning programmes for adolescents should form a key part of the emergency education response. Children and their parents, especially refugee and displaced children, should have the option of an education that respects their language, culture and identity. Adequate training of teachers and adequate pay and salary conditions are essential to ensuring the continuation of good quality education services.

- Support the preparation and pre-positioning of national-language education kits that can be deployed quickly during and after armed conflict to ensure continued learning opportunities for children; even when national school systems are facing serious disruption.

- Ensure that schools and educational systems are the focal points for HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and care during emergencies, and that they offer expanded life skills curriculums which include nutritional support, hygiene and other domestic survival skills.

- Devote more resources to adolescents, as they are often forced to become heads of households in conflict situations, and are particularly vulnerable to recruitment and sexual exploitation.

- Perform social and developmental impact assessments (preferably conducted by a diverse group of actors who know the culture) before implementing aid programmes to ensure that they will improve and not worsen a situation.

Donor Governments:

- Allocate or increase resources for children directly affected by armed conflict, and provide overseas development assistance and local development funds with an emphasize on conflict prevention.

- Allocate funding in accordance with the needs and priorities of local communities, and prioritize programs for prevention and long-term post-conflict peace-building. Support from outside experts in child protection during conflict should ensure that such expertise reinforces and rebuilds local capacity and enhances local knowledge, instead of replacing it. Special emphasis should be placed on respecting local culture and local child protection institutions.

- Provide technical co-operation and financial assistance to help prevent the recruitment of children as combatants, and to implement effective strategies for their demobilisation, rehabilitation and social reintegration

- The OECD/DAC, in consultation with the UN and NGOs, are urged to establish criteria and guidelines to reduce disparities in resources allocated to war-affected women and children in different conflict situations. They should also reduce the institutional and budgetary barriers between relief assistance, reconstruction and development co-operation. These issues should be given priority consideration at the high-level consultation in 2001 on Financing for Development.

- Increase technical support and resources so that improved treatment, care and support are available for children affected by HIV/AIDS in conflict situations and in neighbouring communities.

- Donor governments to allocate an extra $10 billion as per the request of UNAIDS for AIDS

prevention and care.

- Donor countries, international agencies and other relevant organisations should ensure the allocation of adequate resources for data collection and analytical research, as well as for monitoring and reporting on children's rights violations.

- Provide resources to support training and capacity-building of local NGOs to enable them to more effectively monitor and report on child rights violations and advocate for the rights of children in armed conflict.

- Ensure that the commitments of resources for war-affected children announced at the Winnipeg Conference are new resources and not taken from other development assistance programs which are also important for children, their families and their communities.

NON-STATE ENTITIES (NSEs):

- Adopt the child protection standards embodied in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its *Optional Protocol* and those described in international humanitarian laws regarding the rights and protection of children in armed conflict. Develop and make public their own codes of conduct relating to war-affected children.

- Carry out training programmes based on such codes of conduct for their armed units and civilian officials.

- Agree to be held accountable and accept monitoring of their commitments to international or internal standards by the UN or other institutions, and to punish violators of children's rights within their own ranks, cooperating with the International Criminal Court.

- Agree to respect and expand current safety zones for children in which access to health care and emergency aid are possible, or to establish them where they do not currently exist.

- Ensure safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance and guarantee the protection of humanitarian personnel.

- Commit to international standards on the protection of children's rights and develop a public reporting mechanism on the measures adopted.

CORPORATE ACTORS:

- Individual companies or industrial sectors should develop corporate responsibility or "best practices" codes of conduct with a view to protecting children's rights in conflict situations. Emphasis should be placed on regulating trade in armaments and natural resources, ensuring equitable labour standards, and addressing other issues as defined by the UN Secretary General's *Global Compact on Business*. Corporate actors should commit to using these codes as guidelines for industry oversight and monitoring.

- Comply fully with national and international legislative measures which prevent corporations from engaging in commercial activities with parties to armed conflict who violate international standards for protecting children's rights. Private sector firms which directly or indirectly benefit from activities which harm children should be prosecuted.

- Encourage increased transparency in company's holdings, business dealings and human rights records to ensure that none of their practices violate children's rights in conflict situations.

- Participate in collaborative meetings with governments to develop effective strategies and investment plans to support war-affected children.

- Provide resources for programs to assist children affected by armed conflict.

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL:

- Request the Special Representative to the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (in consultation with relevant NGOs and organisations) compile a watch list of countries where there is a pattern of violations against children, and receive regular reports on the condition of children in these countries. Where serious violations of children's rights have been identified, the Security Council should send missions to the countries concerned.

- Include in all relevant country situation reports submitted to the Security Council by the Secretary-General an update on the situation of the protection of children's rights.

- Establish a quick and efficient process for receiving reports on child rights abuses from UN agencies, NGOs and other relevant sources to remedy potentially explosive situations before they escalate into armed conflict. This process should be strengthened as a key measure in conflict prevention.

- Sanctions must be selectively and thoughtfully targeted to avoid damaging vulnerable populations, especially women and children. No sanctions regime should be implemented unless the Security Council is persuaded by a rigorous assessment that such a regime will not

have a negative impact on children. Sanctions assessment and monitoring mechanisms should include channels for the submission of evidence from youth and NGOs working in affected communities.

- The Security Council should continue to address the economic agendas of the various actors in conflict situations with a view to restricting those economic activities which prolong conflict and the suffering of children.

- The Office of the High Commission for Human Rights should be invited to regularly participate in Security Council meetings and submit country and thematic reports on the situation of children's rights.

- The Security Council should empower peacekeepers to use all necessary force to protect children and ensure their security.

UNITED NATIONS/REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS:

- The UN and other regional organisations should urge member states and non-state entities to make the signing and ratification of all conventions relevant to children in armed conflict (especially the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its *Optional Protocol*) a central priority before and during the UN Special Session on Children in 2001.

- Develop a mechanism for non-state entities to unilaterally declare their respect for international standards and their willingness to comply with existing conventions, including time-bound commitments. Create an international registry of these commitments and an independent monitoring and public reporting system to keep track of compliance.

- Establish a high-level panel of internationally respected individuals to conduct verification missions to ensure commitment compliance by non-state entities with respect to children's rights; including commitments made to the SRSG.

- Define and develop a new doctrine of humanitarian peacekeeping which prioritizes human security. This includes multidisciplinary and joint approaches by political, humanitarian and military actors. Mobilize the political will to ensure its appropriate use.

- Continue to implement the policy of 18 years old as the minimum age for participation in

United Nations peacekeeping operations, and continue to encourage member states to use this policy as an example for police and military forces world-wide.

- Establish a multi-sectoral task force to conduct gender audits of all peace-keeping missions.

- Ensure that child protection functions and training are systematically integrated into all peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace-building operations so as to better respond to the complexity of modern conflict situations. These components should be adequately resourced and staffed to handle child rights and gender-based violations. The UN should deploy child rights monitors and child protection advisors before, during and after conflicts and strengthen mechanisms to ensure that their reports are followed up on.

- Increase training activities on children's rights and gender for both military and non-military personnel. Include these training programmes in the curricula of national, regional and international peace-keeping training centres. Peace-keeping and military personnel should ensure that the situation of children in armed conflict is constantly monitored, and that their rights are respected and the *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict* is implemented.

- UN agencies and NGOs to give high priority to education and peacebuilding in their consolidated appeals for war-affected countries.

- Expand, reinforce and actively promote the Secretary General's *Global Compact on Business* initiative, by working with companies to develop specific guidelines for doing business in countries in conflict.

- Urge member states to take concrete steps to investigate, prosecute and sanction individuals and corporate enterprises involved in the illegal trafficking of currency, arms, natural resources, or other elements which exacerbate armed conflict and the abuse and brutalization of children.

- Regional organisations should establish child protection units within their secretariats to devise policies and programmes to ensure the protection of children during conflict in their regions.

- Youth participation at the UN Special Session for the World Summit for Children should be a priority for the agenda. In addition, there should be support for youth to come together through ongoing consultation mechanisms.

- SRSG/CAC should participate actively in the process leading up to the UN Special Session on Children in 2001 to ensure that war-affected children are on its agenda in a meaningful way.

- Strengthen the capacity of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to investigate and monitor the situation of children in conflict areas in addition to its regular 5 year reporting cycle.

- UN and regional groups to work together more closely towards prompt and appropriate responses, early intervention, and the deployment of the peacekeeping forces necessary to best protect children.

- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should be strengthened to carry out the monitoring and reporting of child rights violations in all conflict areas, and should prepare a consolidated annual report on the situation of children's rights, extracted from Country and Thematic Reports and from relevant treaty bodies.

- The Committee on the Rights of the Child should develop additional guidelines on reporting and monitoring the implementation of the *Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.*

- Engage regional organisations to put a stop to human rights abuses by countries in their area, and encourage the more frequent use of regional mechanisms for enforcing accountability.

- UN agencies should present specific proposals to the UN Special Session in 2001 to strengthen co-ordination among them for the protection of children and the provision of assistance in conflict situations.

- UNAIDS should lead the development of a co-ordinated UN strategy on HIV/AIDS, children and conflict.

- The Committee of Co-Sponsoring Organisations of UNAIDS should meet to discuss HIV, children and conflict as a matter of urgency; the findings of the meeting should feed into the Special Session on Children 2001.

- The UN should carry out a major action-oriented review/study to identify the impact of small arms on children in time for the 2001 Special Session on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms.

- Ensure effective early-warning systems for conflict-prone situations that:

- Report on the threats to the security and rights of children;
- Track the price and availability of small arms;
- Pay specific attention to the situation of girls;
- Report on the scope and methods of the recruitment of children;
- Report on other factors which target youth.

CIVIL SOCIETY/NGOS:

- Establish an international NGO network on war-affected children to enhance communication and collaboration between individual NGOs and existing networks, create task forces to work on specific country situations and build an international database to help monitor child rights in situations of armed conflict.

- Actively monitor and report on violations of children's rights in conflict areas, bringing information to the attention of key political actors. Work to build an international monitoring system that links local child protection networks with international monitoring and advocacy organizations.

- Media organisations and NGOs to bring to the public's attention the culpability of perpetrators of children's rights and those who aid and abet them, politically, economically or militarily.

- Continue to lobby for the ratification of all international and regional instruments relevant to the protection of children in conflict, especially the OP/CRC, the Ottawa Convention on landmines, the Rome Statute of the ICC and for the handing over of suspected children's rights violators to existing international tribunals.

- Incorporate the active participation of children and youth into the planning and implementation of pre and post-conflict programs to ensure that such programs effectively meet the actual needs of young people.

- Advocate against amnesties being granted to those guilty of egregious violations of children's rights.

- NGOs should urge shareholders of companies that violate codes of conduct to put pressure on their boards to change their corporate behaviour.

- Begin the disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation of children while conflict is ongoing.

- Focus programmes to support war-affected children on their resilience, positive functioning, and well-being. Healing and helping children should be done with the children themselves, their families, schools, communities and teachers.

- Implement training programmes to increase the capacity of local NGOs to monitor and report on child rights violations in conflict-affected and conflict-prone countries.

- Ensure that girls are accorded specialised attention before, during, and after conflict. This includes equal access to education, property rights, vocational training and reproductive health services. Ensure that all humanitarian responses in conflict situations emphasise the special reproductive health needs of women and girls, and include systematic reporting on sexual violence. There must also be strengthened policy guidance on gender-based violence and sexual exploitation.

YOUTH:

- Where possible, youth organisations will boycott and/or use pressure tactics against companies that make ammunition and arms.

- Youth to take the initiative to come together to share experiences, network and support each other in their work in monitoring and advocating around issues related to war-affected children.

- Youth to come together through innovative means (e.g.: soccer games between youth who would not normally have met due to propaganda and instilled hate).

- Use the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, including youth and child-friendly versions, to pressure their governments to account for their actions.

- Youth delegates to the International Conference on War-Affected Children commit to following up with their governments on commitments made at the Conference.

- Use new technologies such as the Internet to facilitate communication and build solidarity between young people in war-affected countries and countries at peace.

- Youth organisations should run awareness-raising programmes with adults on the rights of children.

- Youth and youth-serving organisations should take into consideration the social and economic

conditions which cause youth to participate in conflict. These organisations should focus on economic alternatives for young people.

- Youth need to work together with other actors to clarify what youth participation means.
- Youth participation is often token and real discussions need to be had on what it means to have meaningful participation.
- Youth monitoring teams should evaluate projects to ensure that recipient governments spend money appropriately.

MEDIA:

- Media and journalists should give children and youth access to electronic, print, radio and television media to ensure that children are portrayed accurately.
- Media organisations to pressure/encourage governments to ratify conventions relevant to war-affected children, and to act as watchdog organisations to ensure compliance by mobilising public opinion on these issues through "name and shame" campaigns.
- Media should establish their own guidelines to avoid the exploitation of war-affected children. Media should focus on the potential and abilities of war-affected children instead of portraying them simply as victims.
- Support the development, production and diffusion of radio programs specifically aimed at war-affected children. Youth should be encouraged to play a significant role in the development of these programs.

FAMILIES, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES:

- Teachers and other community leaders must be trained in children's rights and on how to work with children in an empowering way. The value of youth participation should also be promoted among educators.
- Schools should disseminate the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (child-friendly versions) in every country to make children aware of their rights. A culture of rights and peace needs to be spread to all children.

- Communities need to be sensitized about demobilized child soldiers. Demobilized children are often afraid to return to their communities since everyone knows who was involved in the war.

- Seek a balance between local traditions and international standards, and work within communities to bridge the current gap between the two.

RESEARCHERS

- Establish a network integrating the efforts of individuals researchers, research institutions, NGOs, UN agencies and other relevant institutions to better address these neglected areas and focus more research on:
  - local values and traditions that protect children;
  - analysis of the effectiveness (including cost-effectiveness) of what we are doing in conflict prevention;
  - adolescents;
  - genocidal rape and sexual abuse of children in situations of armed conflict;
  - abductions and disappearances of children;
  - girl soldiers;
  - internally displaced children.

- Research needs to be more child-centered, addressing distinct areas of concern for children and encouraging the integration of children in the design, development and implementation of research projects.

- All relevant actors should gather and analyze data on children affected by armed conflict, disaggregating it by age, gender, and geography, with a focus on the special needs of adolescents and girls.

Annex III

Youth statement to the Ministerial Meeting of the International Conference on War-Affected Children

Good afternoon, Merhaba, hosh galden, baherben, salut, taato, mire dita, somkorup, fellow delegates.

We would like to welcome you and thank you for this opportunity to participate in this conference. Although some of us now live in peace in Canada, among us we represent war-affected children worldwide.

We speak to you as young people with the experience of war. We have lost out homes and our schools. We have been abused, tortured, and raped. We have witnessed brutal murders and have been abducted and separated from out families. Some of us have fought in wars against our own kin.

We also speak to you as young people who want to be involved in building peace in our communities. We have many concerns but also many ideas that we would like to share with you.

Based on what we have seen, and are seeing, what we have felt and are feeling, as well as what we have shared with one another, we have come to a consensus that children are the people most affected by war.

During this conference, we have heard a lot of rhetoric about how young people are the leaders of the future. While not dismissing the truth of this statement, we say that we have a crucial role to play in our societies now. Our recommendations to improve our future must be respected and we need to be involved in the planning and implementation in all levels.

From this conference, we want to see practical solutions that benefit war-affected children emerge. We wish to see the mere discussions of these issues cease and encourage action to see more and better quality support for war-affected children. Many of the solutions are already there (for example the Convention on the Rights of the Child), but so far we have not seen any strong and effective actions regarding what has been written.

We would like to share with you what we strongly believe to be the main priorities that have been highlighted by us, the young experts in this conference.

Education:

Around the world, there are tens of thousands of children who, because of wars, are denied their right to education. Education is the key to preventing conflicts and to rebuilding our lives after conflict. We demand quality education be provided to all children affected by war. In addition to courses offered in national curriculum, education needs to emphasize awareness through teaching the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Self-understanding and development must be motivated through capacity building, leadership training, and the exploration of issues such as

women's rights and democracy. This education must be provided both during and after war.

Adults also need access to education, especially education that makes them aware of children's rights.

All children need to be encouraged to accept diversity and tolerance. Education is an essential component of peace building. Empowerment must begin at the community level. Long-term conflict prevention begins with social education.

Building Peace

War destroys everything - our schools, our homes, our families, our communities, our jobs, our health and our souls. War destroys our childhood. We need to rebuild all of these things to create healthy communities. On our journey to peace, we need long-term support and assistance.

Beyond simple survival, we need individual, family, and community healing. This means promoting cultural and social activities that teach our communities to work together. As over half of the population of our countries, we are needed to build peace today and to make it last for tomorrow. We are an important part of our communities and want to play a role in making decisions and taking action. We ask government officials, friends, parents, teachers, and other sympathetic adults to help us to learn about and become involved in all political processes - from our neighbourhoods to the United Nations.

To build peace and prevent war, we need long-term commitments that help us to defeat poverty. We want local people to lead the development, but we need access to skills, knowledge and tools to improve the economies of our communities. When people can make a good living and respect all people regardless of their gender, age, or ethnicity, it is less likely that they will go to war. People need to have enough money so that they are not forced to partake in conflicts.

Refugees and Internally Displaced People:

During war many people, including women and children, are denied their right to safety. Without refuge, children are likely to be hurt, maimed, killed, or manipulated into joining rebel factions and other groups that destroy their innocence. It is crucial that sanctuary be made available, regardless of expense. Because of war, many children and their families are unable to return to their communities. We demand that the international community take actions to allow all refugees and internally displaced people to safely return home.

For those who feel trapped within refugee camps, it is necessary that they be provided equal and essential basic needs, including satisfactory food rations and sanitary living conditions. All child refugees must be offered free education, as a child's learning process must not be interrupted by displacement.

Refugees need more flexible and efficient assistance in receiving the proper documentation to allow access to aid while they are in the camps and re-integration within their own communities

following the conflict.

Leadership roles within the camp should be equally distributed among all, including adolescents. We must be involved in making the decisions and helping to plan programs inside refugee camps.

Tools for Destruction

Preventative measures are needed to protect the rights of children worldwide. In order to protect our children, we must prohibit the production and trading of weapons, including small arms and landmines. The quantity of small arms that a country can export, import, or stockpile is currently unregulated. An independent international organization should be put in place to monitor and facilitate all arms trade, as well as assist countries in establishing internal small arms control. Such an organization should facilitate the ban on arms sale to governments that do not operate within human rights standards. Also, in post-war situations, disarmament processes must be encouraged where small arms can be recovered and destroyed. Destruction of these arms means ensuring that they will never be reused. All companies and nations involved in the production and use of landmines must be put to shame.

Violations Against Children's Rights

During war we are more vulnerable to the abuse of your rights. War makes our societies more violent, and children suffer the results of this violence. Children are orphaned without any support, abducted to serve in armies, sexually abused by armed groups and may be forced into prostitution because there are no alternatives when family members are killed. In some cases children are dehumanized through drugs and propaganda. In other cases, child soldiers choose to become soldiers in order to protect themselves and their families, or to gain food, shelter, and in some cases, a sense of family. In either case, rehabilitation programs are needed to deal with all aspects of war-related trauma among youth both during and after conflict. In order to recover, we need counselling and we need to know our rights - the right not to be abused, raped, especially in times of war when we are vulnerable to abuse.

In the case of child soldiers, we demand that no young person under the age of 18 be recruited by either force or choice into the armed forces. Those who refuse to abide by this fundamental human right should be punished and shamed among the nations.

How we will help to work on these issue

Through examination of our priorities and recognition of the vital importance of action, we have come to the conclusion that as youth, it is ultimately our responsibility to put our own words into action and urge the adult participants of this conference to follow suit.